

## Floods in Baltistan, Pakistan

**The Felix Baltistan Foundation** has been working in human development for almost ten years in the Hushé Valley, in Baltistan (Pakistan). Now it is also providing emergency relief to the people of this valley.

### Report about the situation in Baltistan after the floods

September 2010

Although Baltistan has suffered in the past from floods and landslides, this is the first time that it has turned into a catastrophic situation. Monsoon rains do not usually come to this area as the Himalayas, which lie to the east, usually form a natural barrier. However, on the morning of August 7 2010, heavy monsoon rains arrived in Baltistan.

The villages near the rivers were flooded by the overflow of the Indus River and several of its tributaries, whilst the villages in the foothills of the mountains suffered landslides which smashed everything in their path.

More than fifty towns were affected, five badly damaged: Qumran, Talis Karkh, Frano and Ghurse, and in two of them, Talis and Qumran, a total of fifty-one people were killed. Across the region thousands of animals have died, thousands of trees have fallen and a large percentage of crops have been lost.

It is important to note here that in Baltistan there are about 45,000 families, with an average of 8-10 people in each family, of which 90% live on subsistence farming in an arid and high mountain area, where the land allows only one crop a year, which is mainly wheat. They also have some fruit trees and some animals. The climate is extreme: 30C in summer and -20C in winter.

For other products like sugar or oil, and supplies such as clothing, building material and so on, they are directly dependent on imports from the south of Pakistan. The only road that connects both areas is the Karakorum Highway which has been heavily damaged and closed in several sections as a result of the monsoon. In addition to this, there is an almost total lack of fuel in the region.

**The Felix Baltistan Foundation** has been working in human development for almost ten years in Hushé Valley, in Baltistan, where Talis is located. Now it is also providing emergency relief to the people of the Hushé Valley.

The first relief aid was given within hours of the disaster. Several members of the local foundation, FIFBM (Felix Baltistan Machulo Iñurrategi Foundation) moved to Talis to provide hot meals for the families who had been left homeless and without livelihoods.

A census from house to house was made and from this it was possible to distribute flour, rice and oil the following day. In coordination with local authorities and the Red Cross, several tents were also distributed to the affected families.

Now the objective is to carry out a mid to long term project to face the imminent coming winter with temperatures of -20C.

The three basic areas which FBF will work on are:

- 1- Recovery of the agricultural lands (to start tilling the lands in the beginning of spring).
- 2- Food support during the winter.
- 3- Reconstruction of the houses (to avoid deaths from cold).

### **Situation of Talis**

The several damaged villages around Skardu have received international help, or government help, but due to its location in a lateral valley at 2800 meters, Talis is still suffering. The village was isolated for many days after the flash flood.

At 1:30 am on 7 August 2010, the village of almost 3000 habitants was badly affected by a mass of water, soil and stones coming down from the mountains; a flash flood that caused landslides as well. 239 families were directly affected by the catastrophe. 75 houses were damaged, of these 26 were completely destroyed. 13 people are dead and two of them are still missing, buried under the 2 to 3 meters of mud and stones which are still covering the affected area. 20 people were injured and are still receiving medical treatment.

Entire families have lost their crops: mainly wheat, vegetables, apricots and apples, but also the fodder to feed the animals during the winter.

In total, 918 kanal (about 46 hectares - 1 kanal is about 500 sqm of land) have been damaged. 7 kanals have been totally carried away by the water and the area is now covered with mud and stones. In this area, a total of 1.488 fruit trees and 1.521 other assorted trees have been damaged. As for the livestock, 20 cows and 56 sheep and goats were lost.

In the local market many shops were destroyed: 21 shops totally and 7 shops partially.

The Hydro Electric power station was completely destroyed, and it will take more than two months to repair it. The main road was closed totally for two weeks, although a temporary road has now been opened.

### **If you wish to collaborate:**

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